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## Parole Enhanced Policing Program Has Statewide Support

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The Connecticut Board of Parole, an agency responsible for not only parole grants but also for parole supervision, in 1997 began participating in Project One Voice, initiated by the New Haven Police Department and the U.S. Attorney's office. The project brought together various parts of the criminal justice system to share information and participate in joint operations. Our participation in this project helped us to recognize that there was a disconnect between community corrections and the community, and especially with those with primary responsibility for public safety—the local police departments. Historically in Connecticut, parole has been an extension of prison, and has had little interaction with local law enforcement.

Police officers generally have had little knowledge of what parole is or does, other than the negative notion that “they let felons out of prison early.” Connecticut's parole officers, on the other hand, have usually worked as correctional officers with little or no previous “street time.” The bulk of their training and expertise has been in custodial corrections.

Recognizing these mutual gaps in knowledge led us to believe that both missions, policing and parole supervision, could benefit from collaboration. The police could gain by learning who the parolees in their jurisdictions were, as most were known offenders who had returned to the community. Further, the police could benefit through a new understanding of the unique tools at the disposal of parole to help reintegrate, or when necessary, quickly remove parolees from the community. Used judiciously, these tools are extremely helpful in preserving public safety. From the parole side, the police knowledge of the community is invaluable, as is the exponential increase in the number of eyes and ears available in a collaborative effort in which the police monitor the parolee 24 hours a day.

Rather than start at ground zero, we decided to explore an existing program with known success and extend it to parole. The concept of community policing has become well established over the past decade, giving police departments considerable input from those who are the consumers of police services. As in any business, knowledge of consumer concerns lends itself to creating a better product, which indeed has been the case in most successful community policing programs.

The creation of partnerships between community corrections and local police agencies is not new. The best known precedent is probably Boston's Nightlight Program. (See Ronald P. Corbett, Jr., Bernard L. Fitzgerald, and James

Jordan, "Police/Probation Partnerships as an Officer Safety Strategy," *Topics in Community Corrections*, 1996.) Using concepts developed there in combination with the principles of community policing, we felt that we could close the gaps between parole and local police departments and parole and the community, creating a synergism to benefit all.

## Finding Commonality

The overarching mission of the criminal justice system is public safety. However, the primary goals of the system's components (i.e., the individual agencies) can be distinctly different. To create a successful partnership, this must be recognized.

Police departments have traditionally put their primary emphasis on removing offenders from the community, and this has received considerable reinforcement over the years from policy-makers and the public. One of the best examples is the "war on drugs," in which a tremendous amount of money and public policy pronouncements have been directed toward enforcement, resulting in more arrests and stiffer sentences. At the same time, corrections—the recipient of the product of this enforcement, namely inmates—was searching for ways to move offenders back into the community to relieve severe prison overcrowding and remedy huge custodial safety concerns affecting staff and inmates alike. Numerous early release schemes were created, some better thought out than others.

The result, ironically, created a commonality between the police and corrections: each had to deal with the same offender again and again. Herein was a basis for collaboration.

We felt that initially it was best to partner with police departments in the state that were already working within a strong, existing community-based structure. Police officers working in a community policing environment are generally more open to new concepts, are focused on the general well-being of the community, know the community leaders, and are aware of the particular concerns of the community. These officers have developed a relationship of trust with the community that is essential to an effective program. This type of operation is more common in larger cities, and this is where we first concentrated. Once we were established and had refined the working concept, we began to export the program to other areas.

## Establishing Effective Communications

If the goal is collaboration, communication is the key to success. Each partner must understand the mission, philosophy, and needs of the other. While accepting

### Profile: Connecticut Parole Enhanced Policing Program

#### Partner agencies:

Connecticut Board of Parole and local police departments across the state.

#### Purpose:

This partnership is designed to best utilize the unique knowledge and abilities of both police and parole to complement the functions of each agency.

#### Launched: 1998

that there may be disagreements, a partnership must have a pre-established mechanism for satisfactory resolutions. To this end, we have established lines of communication at four levels: administration, middle management, operations, and parolee.

**Administrative communication.** The chief of police and the director of parole should have a relationship. They should agree on the scope of participation and duties of each agency. Some agencies prefer a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU), and others like a more fluid agreement that can be adjusted with a phone call. In any case, the relationship should be maintained with periodic contacts between administrators. Often this can be done at meetings of committees or groups that both administrators attend, such as a state or regional chiefs of police or criminal justice organizations.

At the administrative level, the primary concerns are cost, risk, and effort vs. benefit. Police chiefs are often approached by state and federal agencies to participate in enterprises that require the expenditure of resources, especially that most valuable of resources, manpower. The program most likely to succeed and continue is one that has little or no cost. To achieve this in a collaborative operation, the duties and missions of each partner should be compatible to the extent that, in performing most tasks, each partner benefits. For example, a home visit involving a parole officer and a police officer advances parole community supervision and acquaints the police officer with parolees living in his area. Also, the conversation that takes place between the officers around that home visit often proves enlightening to both. Operations that do not have common benefit should generally be discouraged. The perception of equal benefit to each agency is key.

**Middle management communication.** Lines must be open between those who have the responsibility for making decisions for a region or district. Parole supervision in Connecticut is organized into four districts, each with a supervisor who maintains a relationship with the police manager(s) directly responsible for the collaborative project. This may be one individual in the police department, or there may be several precinct, district, or division commanders, depending on the structure of the department. Concerns at this level are usually of an operational nature and often involve territorial issues and the resolution of procedural differences. A good understanding of each other's duties and limitations is important at this level, along with clear-cut lines defining areas of control. Equally important for optimizing this relationship is the restraint of egos, both agency and personal.

If potential conflicts can be identified and discussed up front, there is less chance there will be a misunderstanding later. One area that can be particularly troublesome concerns using parolees as police informants. Generally we discourage this, as we feel the parolee is better served by leaving that world far behind. However, on rare occasions, the parolee may have some specialized knowledge regarding a serious crime or criminal organization. In such cases, we will work with the parolee and the police in an effort to provide what the police

need without jeopardizing the parolee's rehabilitation. Often the police will want parolees to make controlled drug buys, which we do not allow.

**Operational communication.** Possibly because officers from both agencies are often selected in part for their open-mindedness and affability, line parole and police officers sometimes have the best communication. Careful selection of personnel is therefore another major component of a successful program. One caveat, however, is to keep the parole officer focused on the fact that he is a *parole* officer. Often, due to logistics, the parole officer becomes immersed in the police world, working in a police facility and riding with the officers. The parole officer should be reminded frequently of his role and his mother agency. This can be accomplished by attendance at weekly parole staff meetings and regular parole office assignments. The collaborative program should not consume more than 50% of the officer's time unless special circumstances exist.

**Communication with the parolee and his/her family.** This is especially important. Most commonly, past encounters between police officers and parolees have been a negative experience, often for both. Police participation in this program creates a significant difference—it allows conversations to take place that are constructive in nature, encouraging and often aiding the parolee in re-establishing himself in the community. It also helps create a new relationship between the police officer and the parolee. The police officer now takes an interest in seeing the parolee do well, but subtly reinforced is the notion that the officer will notice if the parolee shows sign of falling into old habits.

### **Core Elements of the Program**

The Parole Enhanced Policing Program is designed to best utilize the unique knowledge and abilities of both police and parole to complement each other.

The following elements are common to most of our programs:

- ◆ Frequent contact between officers from each agency;
- ◆ Police accompaniment on parole home visits;
- ◆ Parole ride-alongs on police patrols of known areas with drug dealing and gang activity;
- ◆ Parole involvement in community meetings;
- ◆ Maintenance of a book in each police facility with basic information on parolees living in the jurisdiction;
- ◆ Parole officer attendance at certain police staff meetings;
- ◆ Parole use of some police facilities;

- ◆ Parole participation in special police operations; and
- ◆ Police notification of any parole operation in their jurisdiction.

In addition, the Connecticut Board of Parole has two specialized units that often work with police departments:

- ◆ The Fugitive Team investigates absconders and often shares information and works with police departments in cases of mutual interest.
- ◆ The Special Management Unit is responsible for supervising sex offenders on parole. They work with police departments in towns where sex offenders reside and also with police sex offender units in larger cities.

### **Local Program Variations**

Although each local Parole Enhanced Policing program in Connecticut adheres to the same basic structure, it is tailored to meet each location's need. Following are some variations seen in specific cities' programs.

**The New Haven program.** New Haven was the first Connecticut city to test parole enhanced policing. The city uses police substations, and the parole caseload has been assigned by substation boundary lines. Therefore, all or most of a parole officer's cases will live within one substation's patrol area. The parole officer is allotted space in the substation and conducts parolee visits there, and police officers from that station accompany parole officers on home visits.

Parole also participates in special projects with the New Haven Police Department. One is the New Haven Timezup project, which involves weekly group meetings of parolees and their families with various criminal justice agencies and community service providers. The group discusses available services and the negative effect of poor choices. Another special operation involved parole officers working with police officers to quell a series of violent incidents at local nightclubs. Parole also participates in various community meetings and in One Voice, a program in which various criminal justice agencies in the New Haven area share information and help in joint operations.

**The Bridgeport program.** The Bridgeport Police Department works out of three precincts, and parole officers are assigned to each. As in New Haven, caseloads are divided along precinct lines.

**The Stamford program.** In Stamford the police department and Parole conduct a Meet and Greet Program, in which a parolee's first contact on leaving prison is at the police station with his parole officer and a police officer. It may be the police officer who patrols the parolee's neighborhood and/or the police officer who arrested the parolee. The meeting is designed to welcome the parolee back to the community, inform him of various programs and opportunities available to him, and to acquaint him with the rules of parole. The Stamford Police Department also

conducts a weekly Compstat Program to which parole officers are invited. Issues and statistics regarding crime and community safety are discussed among police divisions and local representatives of various criminal justice agencies.

**The Manchester program.** Manchester also has a Compstat program. Here, however, not only local representatives of criminal justice agencies are involved, but also other departments of town government, giving attendees a comprehensive view of the community.

**Smaller town programs.** In the smaller towns of Connecticut, often a resident trooper and a few local police officers serve as the town's law enforcement agency under the auspices of the Connecticut State Police. The parole officer covering the area stops periodically at the resident trooper's office and also maintains the information book on parolees living in town. Police officers will sometimes accompany parole officers on home visits, and they often have considerable personal knowledge of the parolee. The Connecticut State Police and the Board of Parole are currently in the process of completing a memorandum of understanding to formalize and standardize the program statewide.

### **Program Benefits**

The Parole Enhanced Policing Program in Connecticut has created more productive relationships between the police and parole, as well as an enlightened regard for each other's mission. The elements that make it work are the obvious benefits to both partners, clear-cut missions, communication, community support, and the fact that it can be accomplished at little or no additional cost. The ultimate beneficiary is the community. ■

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